

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

MOUNTAIN VIEW-LOS ALTOS UNION
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT AND
MOUNTAIN VIEW WHISMAN SCHOOL
DISTRICT.

OAH Case No. 2016040285

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS
COMPLAINT

On March 29, 2016, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request¹ (complaint) with the Office of Administrative Hearings naming Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District and Mountain View Whisman School District (Whisman). On April 11, 2016, Whisman filed a Notice of Insufficiency as to Student's complaint. Neither Student nor Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District have responded to the motion.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).) The party filing the complaint is not entitled to a hearing unless the complaint meets the requirements of title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

A complaint is sufficient if it contains: (1) a description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed initiation or change concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child; (2) facts relating to the problem; and (3) a proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).) These requirements prevent vague and confusing complaints, and promote fairness by providing the named parties with sufficient information to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation. (See H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.)

¹ A request for a due process hearing under Education Code section 56502 is the due process complaint notice required under title 20 U.S.C. section 1415(b)(7)(A).

The complaint provides enough information when it provides “an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint.” (Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.) The pleading requirements should be liberally construed in light of the broad remedial purposes of the IDEA and the relative informality of the due process hearings it authorizes. (*Alexandra R. ex rel. Burke v. Brookline School Dist.* (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, CIV. 06-CV-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991[nonpub. opn.]; *Escambia County Bd. of Educ. v. Benton* (S.D. Ala. 2005) 406 F.Supp.2d 1248, 1259-1260; *Sammons v. Polk County School Bd.* (M.D. Fla., Oct. 28, 2005, 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 [nonpub. opn.]; but cf. *M.S.-G v. Lenape Regional High School Dist. Bd. of Educ.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, 775 [nonpub. opn.].) Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge. (*Assistance to States for the Educ. of Children with Disabilities & Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities* (Aug. 14, 2006) 71 FR 46,540-46541, 46699.)

DISCUSSION

Whisman contends the alleged facts in Student’s complaint are insufficient to constitute a claim against Whisman. This contention is based upon a statute of limitations issue, as well as a short time frame of attendance within Whisman. Determination of sufficiency of a due process complaint merely determines whether the complaint provides enough information to provide an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint, not a motion to dismiss when extrinsic evidence may be considered. Determination of sufficiency is not a determination of fact or validation of a defense to the complaint. The facts alleged in Student’s complaint are sufficient to put Whisman on notice of the issues forming the basis of the complaint. Student’s complaint identifies the issues and adequate related facts about the problem to permit Whisman to respond to the complaint and participate in a resolution session and mediation. Therefore, Student’s statement of the claims is sufficient.

ORDER

1. The complaint is sufficient under title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii).

2. All mediation, prehearing conference, and hearing dates in this matter are confirmed.

DATE: April 12, 2016

DocuSigned by:
Judith Pasewark
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JUDITH PASEWARK
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings